

SENATOR LABEDZ: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise and wholeheartedly support Senator Morehead's amendment. I was co-sponsor of LB 276 with Senator Pappas and I was trying to do the very same thing in an amendment that I was proposing to LB 276. Senator Wesely, it says in Senator Morehead's amendment that the retired state employee who elects to remain in the state employees group health insurance program may be charged up to an additional 10 percent in premium cost if the group insurance carrier can show proof that retirees are increasing the group insurance costs. So I think that 10 percent would probably more than cover any additional cost. Many of the people that have contacted me in regard to state employees, older employees retiring, say at the age of 60 or 62, many of them have a physical disability or a heart condition or anything that would hamper their work for the State of Nebraska. We had the same problem with the City of Omaha when I was working in the mayor's office. Say you have someone that is about 60, 62 years old has a heart condition, they will stay on the job, maybe not doing as well on the job as they had in the past because of their condition and will stay there until they reach the age of 65 whereby the state could retire that person if that is a voluntary retirement of course, and hire somebody younger at a lesser wage and a lesser salary and get full benefit of an eight hours' work rather than have somebody that will be taking sick leave most of the time for the next three years because of their condition. So actually I think it would be a savings to the state when we start letting the older people retire after 25, 30 years of service. All they're asking for is to stay in the program, pay the entire premium themselves plus 10 percent if the state can prove or the insurance company can prove that the premium cost is higher than it would be had they not stayed in the program. They are going to pay the full cost themselves, the entire premium cost, including the state's share. Now when they continue working at the age of 60 to 65 the state is paying a hefty, or I don't know the amount, but it's quite a bit of the share for that employee from the age 60 to 65 to keep working. I know of people that are working now with the state that are in a very, very sad condition as far as working a full eight hours a day, having to use up all their sick leave and the only reason they're not retiring at the age of 60 is because they fear that they will not be adequately covered by hospitalization insurance. Let's face it, the retirement pension from the state is not all that great where they would have to go and